

**MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON
ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS**

Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, March 31, 2009

Time: 6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Place: Montgomery College
Charlene Nunley Student Building
7625 Fenton Street, Room 301
Takoma Park, Maryland

Present: Chair Jane Nishida, Anis Ahmed, Katherine Chin, Kwang Choi, George Dang, Dr. Kamala Edwards Dr. Martin Ma, Shailesh Patel, Lily Qi, Dr. Nayan Shah, Dr. Sovan Tun, Beth Wong, Kui Zhao

Absent: Vice Chair Bruce Lee, Shukoor Ahmed, Elizabeth Chung, Dr. Suresh Gupta, Maria Hrabinski, David Pak, Tammy Pantages, Dr. Amjad Riar

Staff Present: David Lee, Agnes M. Smith

Guest Speakers:
Mark Perriello, Director of Priority Placement, White House Office of Presidential Personnel
Farook Sait, President, Federal Asian Pacific American Council
Charly Wells, Director, NWS Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

I. Welcoming Remarks

Chair Jane Nishida welcomed everyone and informed them that the Commission would be discussing diversity efforts aimed at addressing issues in the Asian American community. She also said that the Commission would like to learn from the example of the federal government and share that experience in Maryland. Since there are so many Marylanders employed by the federal government, the Commission would like to support and help diversify the federal workforce.

II. Guest Speakers

Mark Perriello, Director of Priority Placement, White House Office of Presidential Personnel

Mr. Mark Perriello thanked the Commission for inviting him to the meeting. Mr. Perriello also introduced Mr. Malik Walker, Staff Assistant, Priority Placement Office. Mr. Perriello spoke about the Obama administration's accomplishments in the first eighty days, including the stimulus package. None of this happens without people. His office is focused on the people and making sure that all the presidential appointments are made in a timely manner so they can continue to move forward with the President's very ambitious agenda.

Prior to this position, Mr. Perriello ran a presidential appointments project which had a coalition of twelve organizations which put forth names to the transition team. He is now helping make sure the administration reflects the diversity of America and find talented people from all communities. His task is to make sure that amazing people fill the slots. As of today they have nominated or filled 800 slots. There are approximately 8,000 appointments overall, of which 2,500 to 3,000 must be dealt with now. They have received 500,000 applications, which makes it hard to sort through, but recommendations from leaders across the board are a great help. Mr. Perriello noted that John Gibbs is the Director of Personnel for the President's Office. He has structured the department into six different cluster areas:

1. Domestic Policy
2. Boards and Commissions
3. Legal (Department of Education and Department of Justice)
4. Energy and Environment
5. National Security
6. Economics

Each cluster has the task of looking at various agencies to make sure good names are directed to the Secretary. The White House puts together a diverse list for the Secretary to choose from. Once the selection is made, it comes back to his office for approval.

He gave the Commission some advice to help persons applying for a position. One of the recommendations was to put your name on your file and not just name it "resume". He also said to highlight priority areas, constituency groups, support from members of Congress, local leaders support, etc. Mr. Perriello informed the Commission that although eight hundred jobs have been filled, there are still many positions including the Census Bureau Director which have not been named yet.

Chair Nishida asked Mr. Perriello to share how much representation is there from the Asian Pacific American community. Mr. Perriello said as of February, 6% of all appointments are APA.

Commissioner Beth Wong asked if the independent agencies in government come under his jurisdiction. Mr. Perriello noted that his office does not handle judicial appointments, U.S. Attorneys or U.S. Marshalls. That is handled through Greg Craig's office, White House Counsel. Mr. Perriello noted that his office role varies in reference to independent commissions. They have a direct role in some, and others they have to wait until they are asked for names. If it is an independent agency, technically the White House does not have a lot of say.

Commissioner Kamala Edwards asked how they sort out the applications and what kind of weight do they give people with experience from overseas. Mr. Perriello answered that they definitely look at experience, so knowledge of the issue area is key. One thing that does not translate is managerial experience. You can have someone who is an amazing policy expert, but does not necessary have a lot of managerial experience. That is a challenge when someone is going into government work. There are huge numbers of career staff under them that they need to manage and usually it is a large group. Also, they consider whether the candidate is recommended by a constituency group, member of Congress, etc. Whether or not the person can actually do the job is the critical factor. You can be the most qualified person and make it all the way to the interview, but if the interview doesn't go well, then that is where the process ends. Financial records are looked at very carefully such as taxes, lobbying restrictions, etc. If

someone has been a federal lobbyist for the past two years, they need to wait for that window to close to be considered.

Chair Nishida asked if constituency groups have been identified and what process is in place for forwarding recommendations. Mr. Perriello said that with the Asian community there are a number of groups that they interact with on a regular basis. They identify persons who want to work in the administration, making sure they are qualified. Mr. Perriello invited the Commission to be one of the groups to recommend people.

Commissioner Edwards asked if he would like the Commission to put him in touch with organizations since the Asian community is so diverse. Mr. Perriello answered yes, the more input received, the more qualified people they will be able to find.

Commissioner Wong asked how to find out what vacancies are available. Mr. Perriello answered there are two ways. The first is the Plum Book which lists all the jobs available but does not tell you much about them. The second way is to find out who has already been hired, which is difficult since all positions are not publicly announced. Some of the eight hundred people are still vetting, so they cannot say the position is filled. Not everyone makes it through, so they do not want to put someone out there and say they have selected them. People who are going for Senate confirmed positions have to fill out a sixty-seven questionnaire form. Everyone must fill out the FBI background check SF86.

Commissioner Anis Ahmed asked about severance pay. Mr. Perriello said that there is no severance pay.

Chair Nishida again expressed her appreciation of the diverse cabinet that President Obama has in terms of Asian Pacific Americans.

Mr. Perriello informed the Commission that for the political appointments there is a strong commitment to diversity. So in all of the recruiting they make sure they are out there getting names to have a strong diverse workforce at the top. At the career level, John Barry was recently named the head of personnel management. Mr. Barry is very committed to diversity in the workforce.

Chair Nishida again thanked Mr. Perriello for sharing with the Commission what President Obama's administration is doing.

Mr. Perriello gave the Commission his contact information:

mperriello@who.eop.gov
202-395-1614 (prefer e-mail)

Farook Sait, President, Federal Asian Pacific American Council

Mr. Farook Sait informed the Commission that he is also Special Counsel to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights for the Department of Agriculture. The Asian representation in the labor force is 3.9% nationally. For the federal government, the representation of Asians is a little over 6%. This includes military and civilian. He noted that Asians make up a huge representation in science and math related fields. More than 10% of scientists are Asians. Since 2002, more than 40% of Asians secure Ph.D. in science and math. In agencies that have a high need for those disciplines, Asians make up a greater representation. For example, the

Department of Commerce overall representation is 8%, but for the Patent and Trademark Office it's 27% because of the high need for engineering and science.

Mr. Sait noted that when it comes to manager positions, Asian Americans are not aggressive enough. Mr. Sait named some agencies where there is a high percentage of Asians, such as the Department of Agriculture which has 24% Asian representation. Where you have cutting edge research, animal, plant and health inspection services, food safety inspection services, you have a high representation of Asians, but not in management positions.

Mr. Sait told the Commission that diversity is not something that can be mandated. We need to go through the education process. We have to teach supervisors and management the value of selecting diversity. Some serious education and evaluation are needed. Also, outreach is needed regarding the availability of jobs. Mr. Sait said that a serious plan to educate, evaluate, assess, outreach and enforce is needed to reach the community.

Chair Nishida said that it was mentioned that one of the hurdles or obstacles of advancement in the federal government is the perception of a lack of leadership and management skills, that Asian Americans are perceived as being more passive. She asked Mr. Sait what he would recommend to Mr. Perriello and others to address that perception issue and those obstacles. Mr. Sait answered that if the President is going to hold his cabinet accountable, he has to have the cabinet come back with measureable change in the diversity of the organization. If the cabinet officer cannot represent this to the President at the end of four years, you have a failure. You have to have serious measurement in terms of change. You have the pull and the push. The push comes from complaints. Recently, the EEOC Commission did a poll on individuals discriminated against. The community with the highest percentage in the federal sector was Asian with 36%, and African Americans next with 26%, but what was surprising is less than 2% of Asians filed complaints. This is the only time in all his years working in civil rights that he witnessed the chair of the EEOC telling people to file complaints. If you don't file complaints you will not get anything done.

Charley Wells, Director, NWS Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

Mr. Charley Wells told the Commission that we need to have Asian Americans in positions where they select the individuals for jobs. This is something that has not been done. We have not done a good job of getting the best and qualified up to positions where they can get recognized for what they do. He spoke about Asian Americans being highly educated but working in lower level positions. A lot of managers expect the Asian employees to leave their culture at the door when they enter, but that's impossible. The EEO created a Corporate Recruitment Office so they can base their efforts on the unrepresented minorities that are lacking in the workforce. They also make sure the EEO managers go out to the communities to explain to individuals what type of skills they need. The plan is to reduce the underrepresented. Mr. Wells also spoke about Asians using the complaint process. If you feel you have been discriminated against, complain. Use the system. He is here to help.

Commissioner Sovan Tun spoke about his experience working for the federal government. He first worked for USDA, then for U.S. Mint and now for EEOC. Commissioner Tun noted that he feels slighted and he's tired of fighting/complaining.

Mr. Wells told the Commission that the process is very long. He noted a panel that he sat on in which the complaint was ten years old. The employee was so fed up he didn't want to fight

anymore. The process is much shorter now. You can have a complaint adjudicated in three years verses ten years. He also noted that the NAACP found through their studies that 90% of federal employees who go through the complaint process lose. This is very discouraging.

Mr. Sait added that 96% of formal complaints have no finding of discrimination, but a lot of complaints are settled that the agency recognize with a high degree of vulnerability. Not all complaints go through the whole process. The numbers do not necessarily reflect the degree of success. He also said that the Asian community needs to become a little more sophisticated. For the thirty-seven years he worked in civil rights, he has seen a lot of complaints, but not one time has he seen a letter of support from an Asian organization on behalf of an Asian complainant. He noted the representatives from the Mexican American Legal Defense Education Fund and African American organizations support their community. In his agency alone they have paid more than a billion dollars in damages for one discrimination case. It is not something impossible to achieve. There is a need to get organized. There is a need to advocate. We need to stand next to somebody and say I know that person doesn't have the resources, but we as an organization do. We will provide them the resources. The avenues that are provided to vindicate your rights are avenues you need to use with confidence.

Mr. Larry Shinagawa agreed that there are individuals who want to advance and are willing to step up to the plate and push the issue, but find that there is no one to back them up. This is a persistent and constant problem with Asian Americans. We need to find a system and mechanism to offer this kind of support.

Mr. Wells told the Commission that they need to be the resource for the Asian community.

The Chair spoke about the Commission's role which is to inform the community about the resources and rights that are available.

III. Testimony From the Public

Eric Lachica, U.S. Census Bureau Partnership

Mr. Eric Lachica told the Commission that they are doing grassroots efforts to reach the hard to count communities. They will be counting on the Commission for support, advice and leadership.

Larry Shinagawa, Director, Asian American Studies, University of Maryland

Mr. Larry Shinagawa told the Commission that they talk about history and do research on Asian Americans. They are officially designated as the Census Research Center. They are also the first university in the country designated as an Asian American serving institution. They provide access, education and research on the Asian American youth, especially those going into higher education.

Marlene Cohen, Professor, Prince George's Community College

Dr. Cohen informed the Commission that half of her job is Director of the International Education Center which is a welcoming center for immigrant and visa students at the college.

Jessica Lee, International Rescue Center (IRC)

Ms. Jessica Lee spoke about the International Rescue Center (IRC) which is a non-profit humanitarian organization that works with refugees and asylees. They work all over the country and in twenty-four cities in the U.S. In Maryland there are two offices. She asked for the Commission's help to support the Burmese community.

Angela Lagdameo, Special Assistant to Chief of Staff, Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, Maryland New Americans Council

Ms. Angela Lagdameo gave an update of the working groups for the Maryland New Americans Council.

The Workforce Working group is focused on training and ESL, and attracting key workers.

The Government Access Group is centering its work on recommendations surrounding service providing agencies and performance metrics. They are particularly looking at LEP language access.

The Citizenship Working Group has examined barriers to the naturalization process as well as looked at what's going on in California, Illinois, Washington and Massachusetts regarding processes and programs for immigration reform.

The Financial Services Working Group has heard presentations on mainstream financial services to assist with remittances, check cashing, credit building products and basic transactional accounts. There are also components on financial planning, affordable housing and home ownership.

The next Council meeting will be held on April 7, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at Adventist Hospital in Takoma Park.

IV. Approval of January Minutes

Commissioner Martin Ma moved for approval of the January 13, 2009 Minutes. Commissioner Sovan Tun seconded the motion.

January 13, 2009 minutes were unanimously approved by the Commission.

V. Committee Reports

Economic Development – Commissioner Beth Wong

Commissioner Beth Wong informed the Commission that the 4th Annual Asian American Business Conference will be held on Tuesday, May 5, 2009 at the University of Maryland College Park. On Monday, May 4, 2009 there will be a Network/Awards Dinner held at New Fortune Restaurant. The cost for the Dinner/Awards is \$20.00. It was noted that they would like the Commissioners to get a table. (Each Commissioner would have to pay.) There was a discussion about the budget and it was discussed that the Commission should pay for the Commissioners to attend.

It was noted that maybe in the future this will take place, but for now because of budget constraints this cannot happen.

Executive Director David Lee told the Commission that the Commission is not the sole organizer for this conference. This conference is being organized through a Planning Committee comprised of different organizations who are contributing.

Chair Nishida told the Commission that the budget situation will be discussed in the future.

Commissioner Wong asked Commissioners to forward names of any companies for the awards to Executive Director Lee. The Cost is as follows: May 4, 2009, Dinner/Awards Ceremony \$20.00 and May 5, 2009, Asian American Business Conference (AABC) \$40.00.

Executive Director Lee gave some names of confirmed speakers for the AABC: Congresswoman Donna Edwards; University President Dan Mote; DBED Secretary Christian Johansson. He is awaiting a response about the Governor's attendance and has submitted a scheduling request for the new Commerce Secretary Locke who is a Chinese American.

Workforce Development – Commissioner Kamala Edwards

Commissioner Kamala Edwards told the Commission that the pattern of problems is the same. There is no statistical data in spite of the fact that there is a high concentration of Asian Americans in Montgomery County. Anything that has been done so far is like window dressing. There is no progress being made in spite of all that we say, in spite of all of the programs in place, there are no real measurements.

Chair Nishida noted that the May meeting will be used as a working session in lieu of speakers. This meeting will be used to come up with recommendations for the Governor's Office since the report is due in June. One of the areas that recommendations are needed is using presentations like today from the Federal EEOC Officer, who made some recommendations of the success of the federal government. Also, identifying data as a problem.

Commissioner Wong said that there is a lot of data on the Maryland website in regards to procurement. The Department of Information Technology has a lot of data in terms of IT for Asian American businesses.

Community Development – Commissioner Kui Zhao

Commissioner Kui Zhao informed the Commission of six action items for the Community Development Committee:

1. Establish State's Asian Pacific American Complete Count Committee
2. Recruit Asian Pacific American community representatives
3. Contact the Census Bureau for Census related resources
4. Educate Asian Pacific Americans about the importance of the Census
5. Conduct multi-media campaign
6. Formulate Governor's Complete Count Committees throughout the State

Chair Nishida told the Commission to use the Census recommendations as a basis to come up with other recommendations for each of the committees. She also wanted each of the

committees to come up with objectives or goals that we want to achieve with the measures and steps to achieve those goals.

Social Services – Commissioner Sovan Tun

Commissioner Sovan Tun informed the Commission that the Social Services Committee would like to have conference and health fair. He also reported on a summit he participated on in November 2008 at Montgomery College. They covered all areas such as transportation, health care, housing, employment, and safety. They had a report which had over 1,000 pages but he shared four of the recommendations with the Commission:

1. Expand health based services to seniors in their homes and community.
2. Establish programs that reach a diverse group of seniors.
3. Educate seniors about the services and resources that already exist.
4. Expand partnering for assisted living to low and moderate income seniors.

He also announced that the Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) will be having a conference in May free of charge.

Chair Nishida made a suggestion to the Commission about the availability of Filipino and Indian nurses during the health care crisis. This might be an area where the Commission can make a stronger network between health professionals in the Asian community. It was pointed out that there is a shortage of nurses and physicians.

Commissioner Wong told the Commission that in the past, hospitals couldn't find licensed nurses and had to go outside of the country. The hospitals paid \$10,000 per person to bring them here which takes three years. Hospitals are no longer hiring because of the recruitment fees.

Commissioner Kitty Chin said that this is also the issue with teachers. A lot of teachers are hired under a J1 Visa in Baltimore City (3 years) and a H1 Visa in Prince George's County (6 years). There is a lot of turnover, but now they do not have a budget to pay recruiters so they have stopped.

Commissioner Edwards said that there are Asian educators here without visa issues but they are not getting hired.

VI. New Business

Chair Nishida again proposed to use the May Commission as a working session. Chair Nishida and Executive Director Lee will come up with a template before the meeting. It's time to roll up sleeves and complete some action items. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19, 2009, location TBD.

Commissioner Kwang Choi spoke about the Governor's trade mission to Asia being cancelled. He felt that the Commission should be notified when the Governor makes a decision to do a trade mission. Chair Nishida made the Commission aware of the process when the Governor decides to go on a trade mission. Once the Governor makes the decision to do the trade mission, it goes to DBED. Executive Director Lee told the Commission that the person to contact at DBED is Cathleen Hamel who now has contact information for the Commissioners and who will probably contact Commissioners in the future.

Chair Nishida announced that the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation will be having their Annual Dinner on April 17, 2009 in Washington DC at the J.W. Marriott. She invited the Commissioners who would like to attend to come as her and Executive Director Lee's guests.

Commissioner Wong made a request that future Commissions meetings go to different counties such as Charles and Frederick. The recommendation was accepted and the next meeting will be as follows: May 19, 2009, Howard County and July 21, 2009, Frederick or Charles County.

Commissioner Tun announced that April 19, 2009 is Cambodian New Year and all Commissioners are invited to the celebration.

Chair Nishida asked Commissioners to forward to Executive Lee any events they know of so that it can be put on the Commission website.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.